



A QUEERSAFE ZINE

This zine was put together by Mary Potter, a nurse in training. It was written in collaboration with Leah Newbold and Adriana. Thank you to Sarah Mangle for the so amazing drawings. I still can't get over how she busted out such fabulous drawings in one little rainy afternoon. Thank you to Pam and Allison for taking me on and letting me do pretty much whatever I wanted for this project. I also couldn't have done this without the good folks at Head and Hands. This was the best school project I ever did!! Thank you!!!



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Why a sex health zine for queers?

The reason that I am making this zine is because safe sex education since the arrival of the HIV/AIDS Pandemic has been designed in a way to blame and shame not only queers, but also sex workers, drug users, people with multiple partners and non-white people among others. At the same time education campaigns tend to exclude these groups from large-scale public education campaigns making it even more difficult to get a hold of education and the tools needed to keep these communities safe and healthy.

Being safe shouldn't mean giving up our identities. We can be safe and still fuck who we want to fuck, be healthy, party how we want to party, be responsible, have fun, keep our friends safe, keep our boundaries, not get married if we don't want to, have more than one lover if we want to, and keep our communities safe. If you want to and/or can stop having sex then, cool... If you don't want to and/or can't, then its good to know ways that we can be safe without being celibate.

A word on 'sex' and 'gender'

All this sex and gender stuff is a little confusing but, think about this example: Think of someone who wears tight pants, has long hair who loves children and sewing. What gender does this person have? Couldn't it be either a boy or a girl? Why would we first think that someone with these characteristics was a girl/boy? Does whether a person has a penis or a vagina have anything to do with it? Think about it!

A word on 'QUEER'

Queer has traditionally meant 'strange' or 'unusual', but is currently used in reference to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, trans(s)exual, two-spirit, intersex and anyone else who calls themselves queer. Queer politics / activism / academics is a belief system that embraces an idea of gender and sexual fluidity. It is a belief system that rejects thinking in a way that assumes everyone is heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual. It also rejects the assumption that boys have penises and girls have vaginas, or that penises and vaginas look any certain way. Sex and gender are really complicated and who we love and how we love is maybe even more so. No one can tell you who or how to love! Part of the fun is figuring out what works best for you.

A word on 'Trans'

Trans is a word that can refer to both transgender and trans(s)exual people. People who identify as transgender can be people who have gender identities, expressions or behaviors not traditionally associated with their birth sex. A trans(s)exual person is a person who self-identifies as a member of the gender opposite to the one assigned to them at birth and sometimes undergoes medical treatment, including hormone therapy and sexual reassignment surgery, to change physical characteristics to match their gender. A transman (aka Female To Male, FTM) is a female to male transgender or trans(s)exual person. This person was named a female at birth but changed their identification to male. Thus, this person should be referred to as he, him, his etc. A transwoman (aka Male To Female, MTF) is a male to female transgender or trans(s)exual person. This person was named a male at birth but changed their identification to female. Thus, this person should be referred to as she, her etc.

Queer's And Trans people

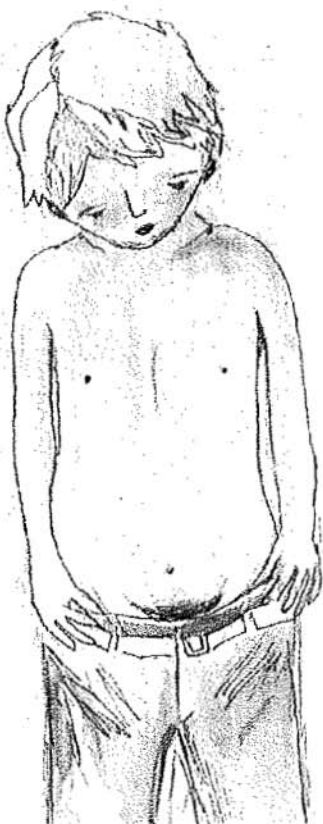
Neither transgender people nor queers have had their needs met by the health care community. It is this lack of awareness that puts these people at risk, not how they identify! It is important to recognize that transgender and trans(s)exuals cannot be automatically clumped in with 'queer'. Some transgender and trans(s)exual people identify as queer and some don't. It's very important to be able to decide what gender we are for ourselves. If we want to be called queer, we should be able to. If someone wants to call themselves a punk / an artist / straight / a nerd, they should be able to do that too. Being able to use whatever terms feel most comfortable for you is a very important part of feeling good about yourself. In general, media likes to assume gender and genitalia only come in two separate categories. This zine rejects that idea and instead presumes that men can have vaginas and women can have penises. Like Peaches says, "Let a woman be a man and let a man do the can-can!!"

A word on immigration and health care

Immigration makes health care a real pain in the ass. People who are non-status (have not received landed immigrant, refugee or citizenship status) are denied health care by our governments who refuse to sponsor treatment for non-status people. However, there are a few places that offer health care to non-status people. In these places, doctors serve these people for free or whatever they can afford. Head and Hands is one of these places. There are also other people who can help at other clinics, however it is more up to the health care professionals themselves to take a patient or not. CLSC Cotes-Des-Neiges is the center for dealing with issues of health for new immigrants (514) 731-8531. At Head and Hands there is also a legal counsellor who can be of help when you are dealing with immigration (481-0277). The Immigrant Workers Center is a place that can also help when dealing with the difficulties of immigration. They can help you to understand your rights and offer support. They are also a big help when trying to get through all the paperwork. You can get a hold of them at (514) 342-2111.

STIs aka

STDs



One of the main reasons for this zine is to empower queer people to make decisions for themselves so that they can stay safe and healthy.

Empowerment refers to increasing people's political, social and/or economic strength. In other words it is about putting power back into our own hands. It's important for us as queers to get informed about our health! In order to do this we need to be aware of the amount of risk there is in each activity that we do. It is also important to be able

to recognize warning signs of potential problems so that we know when to get outside help.

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)
(also known as sexually transmitted diseases, STDs) are one of the risks that we

must be aware of while having sex and we should teach ourselves how to avoid them. If we cannot avoid them, it is important to know how to recognize them so that we can get help when we need it. As queers we are often told that the kind of sex we have is risky business. On the other hand, typical medical information often downplays the risk of lesbian sex and the ability of women to catch STIs. If two people having sex both have vaginas they are often misled to believe that they are at little risk for STIs and there is no need for testing or Pap Smears. Two people with penises having sex are often told that the kind of sex that they are having is of very high risk for giving and getting STIs. What is important for us to know is what the risks are in each sexual activity rather than viewing our identities as risky. In this book I include a list of the STIs, however this list doesn't cover everything and if you have further questions please contact Head and Hands at (514) 481-0277.

C O N T R A C E P T I O N

For information on contraceptive methods such as the pill or for emergency contraception please contact the health educators at Head and Hands to get informed. It is best to call them as soon as possible (within 48 hours is best) if you feel like you might need emergency contraception like the morning after pill. If you want to get on the pill then make an appointment with a doctor/nurse/health educator to talk about your different options.

It's your Health!



Health care is something that we all deserve access to. Sometimes, the way the health care system is set up makes it hard for us to get a hold of what we need...be it information or care. Sometimes we learn that health care

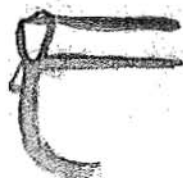
isn't something that we are supposed to think much about. We often think about it only when we are not feeling well. Then we go in to see the doctor and they tell us what we should do. We go home with their pieces of wisdom in the form of a prescription and feel better?? This idea that they know what is best for us is a myth. It's empowering for us to know what we want from our health care providers so we are able to ask for it. Taking care of your health may seem like a simple thing to understand, eat your fruits and vegetables, get enough sleep, drink lots of fluids when you have a cold... but taking care of ourselves means a lot more than that. It means being able to make choices about what is best for us ourselves, recognizing the things that are not good for us and being able to make changes. This can also mean not taking risks that might harm us. Having safe sex is a great way to keep ourselves healthy.

Testing

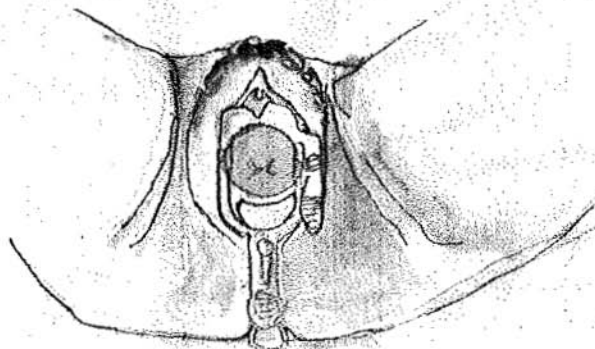
Often we are confused about what it is that actually is happening when we go to see our doctors. This section highlights the different ways that the health care provider tests for STIs.

The Pap test. One common misconception is that a Pap test is looking for STIs. The Pap test is designed to look at the cells inside a vagina and pick up on any problems there may be on the cervix. The cervix is the lower, narrow portion of the uterus where it joins with the top end of the vagina. This is a test designed to catch any changes in the cells of the cervix. The changes can be caused by a number of things but one of the more serious reasons would be if the cells were pre-cancerous. Getting the Pap test every year once you have started being sexually active (oral sex counts everyone) can catch anything before it gets too serious.

a speculum



a speculum in a vagina



Chlamydia and Gonorrhea. While doing a Pap test a doctor can also swab the cervix for Chlamydia and Gonorrhea. In this test a speculum is used to open the vagina and a swab will be taken of the cells on the cervix. A swab looks like a long q-tip. They are not likely going to do STI testing while doing a Pap test unless you specifically ask them to! For penises, the doctor will swab the urethra (the hole of the penis where pee comes out) for any bacterial infections. Make sure if you are going to see your doctor for an STI test that you don't pee for a couple of hours before so that the pee doesn't wash the bacteria away right before the test, as the test can read an untrue negative result.

HIV, Hepatitis B and syphilis are tested by blood tests. This is done using a needle to draw blood often from veins in our arms.

The time for testing:

- For syphilis it takes 10 days after a chancre (sore) appears to test (about 3 to 5 weeks after infection), however these tests come out negative in late syphilis.
- Hepatitis can show up as soon as one month after contact.
- HIV takes 3 months to show up.
- Testing for Chlamydia can be done one week after exposure and Gonorrhea can take up to 3 weeks for a true result.
- The doctor can tell if you have Herpes or HPV (Genital Warts) by doing an examination of your genital area for either Herpes sores or a wart.
- If there is anything unusual going on your genitals it's really best to get it checked out!

Chlamydia And Gonorrhea

What are they?

Gonorrhea and Chlamydia are both bacterial infections. They are some of the most common STIs but luckily, are also treatable with antibiotics.

How do I get them?

Chlamydia and Gonorrhea live in the same places, in fluids in the penis, the vagina, the anus as well as in our throats. This is why touching mouths to genitals, genital-to-genital contact and anus to genital contact while having unprotected sex can spread these diseases.

What should I be looking for?

Think of these STIs like most other bacterial infections. Bacteria tend to multiply in our body fluids, giving the areas where they live a different texture or feeling. These are some things to be aware of

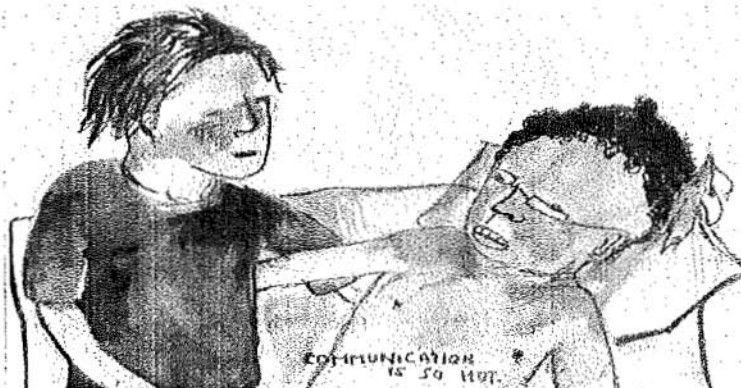
- genital fluids of a different texture, more watery or more thick
- burning when peeing
- pain around the genitals or pain during sex
- vaginal bleeding during sex
- vaginal bleeding between periods

Even though we can remain in touch with our bodies and look for signals to let us know that we might have an infection, sometimes we are left with no clues. As we can often get an infection with Chlamydia

and Gonorrhea and not experience anything different, it is important that we try and have as safe as sex as possible. If you are having safe sex then you don't have too much to worry about. If there has been an accident (like a condom broke etc.) then it's best to go to a clinic for a check up. Unfortunately, there is a minimum two-week period between the time of an incident and the time it takes for an STI to show up. If you have been assaulted, you also might want to get a check up and you may be interested in visiting a councillor. There is a councillor at Head and Hands that you can reach at 481-0277 to make an appointment or you can call The Sexual Assault Center Of McGill to speak with someone on the phone (398-8500).

Can I get rid of it?

These infections can be cured with proper diagnosis with just one dose of antibiotics taken by mouth. If they are not treated at this stage, the effects can get much more serious; that is why it's best to treat them early. If you are being treated for an STI, write a list of who you have had sex with recently. Let them know, because if they are not treated and you have sex with them again, you can easily get the STI again.



Pubic Lice & scAbies

Pubic lice (also known as crabs) and Scabies are considered to be STIs but can also be passed along from person to person through sharing clothes and towels or sleeping in the same bed. They are tiny insects, similar to the fleas our beloved feline/canine friends sometimes get. These insects bite us and can dig under our skin and lay eggs, causing us to be very (b)itchy.

What should I be looking for?

Scabies:

- itching, mainly at night
- a rash may appear between your fingers, on your wrists, tummy, ankles or around your genitals

Pubic Lice:

- itching around our pubic area
- light brown insects the size of a pinhead
- oval whitish eggs on the hair (easier to see then the insects themselves)

Can I get rid of it?

Scabies and lice may be treated easily with special creams, lotions or shampoos. These are available at drugstores (over the counter), so if you can find the courage, ask...or look around. If you don't treat these little brats, you may get a skin infection that can land you in the doctor's office. Again, be sure to tell anyone you have been in close contact with, even if you just had a sleepover to watch 'Hedwig and the angry inch'. You might have left some bugs in the bed sheets.

Syphilis

Syphilis is another bacterial infection. It is a very serious disease that can affect your entire body.

How do I get it?

Syphilis enters the body through an infected person's body fluid entering into tiny tears in the skin on the inside of a mouth, vagina and/or anus. This can happen in all kinds of sex where there is an exchange of body fluids such as unprotected mouth to genitals, vagina to vagina, penis to anus etc.

What should I be looking for?

Syphilis causes sores to appear around the vagina, penis, anus and inside the mouth. The sores may not be painful and may come and go on their own. It may also cause "flu"-like symptoms as well as a rash on the hands and feet or the whole body. If you don't get tested for this STI you might not know you have it and it can get very serious.

Can I get rid of it?

Syphilis can be detected by doing a blood test. It is regularly tested for during STI check ups. At Head and Hands they can test for this with a blood test when they test for HIV and Hepatitis B. It can be cured with antibiotics if it is caught early enough.

Genital Herpes

What is it?

Herpes is a virus that causes painful sores commonly on the lips or around the genitals.

How do I get it?

It can be passed to another person who has direct contact with an open sore but it can also be passed from person to person before a sore is visible. There are two types of Herpes. People often think that the first type affects the mouth and the second type affects the genital area. This isn't exactly true - both types of the virus can affect the genitals, anus and the mouth and the both types of virus can be passed from mouth to genitals/anus.

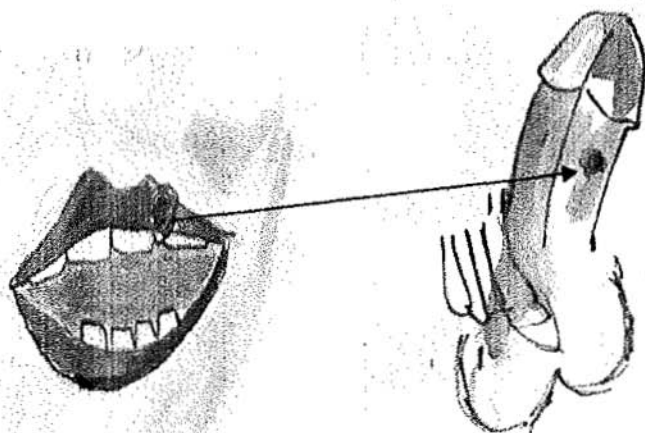
What should I be looking for?

Within the first week of getting Herpes, a tingling/itching feeling might be felt in the area where the virus has landed. A cluster of tiny blisters may appear and you may get a headache/fever. These blisters will burst leaving painful sores that last about two to three weeks. You should be on the look out for any sores/bumps/lumps that look like blisters and may be painful to the touch. It is important to say that not everyone with Herpes will have an outbreak. Some people may have a first outbreak and then never have one again. For people who have a lot of outbreaks, even when you are not having any sores it is still possible to pass on the virus. Having safer sex reduces the chances of passing it on, but it is still

possible to pass on herpes when using protection.

Can I get rid of it?

There is no cure for Herpes. The important thing is to minimize and treat your symptoms. There is medication that can be used to minimize the pain of the outbreaks as well as lessen the amount of outbreaks you are having if you have more than 6 per year. Stress is also known to play a role in the outbreaks so it is important that you do things in your life that help you deal with your stress (this is important even if you don't have Herpes). It is important to inform anyone you are having sex with that you carry the virus and to have as safe sex as possible. While you have sores, it's generally a good idea to take a break from all sex which might infect another person.



A sore on a lip can easily turn into a sore on the penis if you're not using a condom!

HUMAN Papilloma Virus

What is it?

HPV (also known as Genital Warts) is another STI in the virus family. As its name suggests, it causes warts to appear on the genital area, or around the anus. This is the same bugger that causes that wart on your big toe. There are many different strains of HPV (over 100) but only around 30% are known to occur on the genitals. Of these, fewer than 15% are known to cause serious problems.

How do I get it?

HPV is one of the most contagious STIs. It can be passed from hands to genitals or skin to skin contact. This is why most forms of sexual contact are able to pass the virus and why one in four youth have the virus. Most people who have HPV will never even have warts or really any problems. In fact, most people will probably never even know they have it.

What should I be looking for?

Although most people with the virus will never have symptoms, if a bump does appear around your genitals/anus, then you should go see a doctor for a diagnosis.

Can I get rid of it?

There is no test to detect whether or not you have HPV. Diagnoses are made upon the appearance of warts. If warts do appear then they can be removed by your doctor. If you have a cervix, then yearly Pap tests are very important as the virus can cause changes in the cells of the cervix. These changes can put you at risk for cervical cancer.

Hepatitis A and B

What is it?

Hepatitis A and B are both infections of the liver caused by a virus.

How do I get it?

Hepatitis A is found in the poo of people with the virus and is usually spreads by close personal contact (including sex or sharing a living space). Eating food or drinking water contaminated with the virus can also spread it. Sexual acts involving the anus, such as rimming (licking around or in the anus), should be done in awareness of this.

Hepatitis B is spread though infected body fluids such as semen, blood, vaginal fluids and saliva. This means it can be passes through unprotected sex as well as sharing needles used to inject drugs. It is a very strong and contagious disease. It can survive on toothbrushes and razors so people sharing the same bathroom can also spread the virus.



Going to lick someone's ass? Use a barrier like these folks to prevent Hep A.

What should I be looking for?

The symptoms of Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B are pretty similar. Most people who become infected with the virus have no symptoms. If symptoms do occur, they do two to six months after catching the virus and can include:

- poor appetite, nausea, vomiting
- headaches
- feeling very tired or generally not well
- jaundice (yellowing of skin and eyes)

This virus can cause serious long-term problems such as liver cancer.

Can I get rid of it?

People can sometimes get the virus and then have it go away on its own. Some people can get the virus and never be sick with it and so never get tested for it and then they never know they have/had it. This is a problem because they can give the virus to others if they are not careful. Hepatitis A and B can be prevented by getting vaccinated and by keeping sex safer. Most people raised in Canada were vaccinated for Hep. B when they were in elementary school. A hepatitis test will tell you if your body is immune from the viruses. These are done at Head and Hands. If your anus is involved in the sex that you are having it is a good idea to ask your health care provider for the vaccination (if you have not had it already).

HIV/AIDS

What is it?

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome). It is a virus that uses your body's immune system to attack the body.

How do I get it?

The virus is spread through body fluids; blood, semen, vaginal fluids, menstrual blood and breast milk. You don't have to worry about pee or spit. The unprotected sexual acts that can pass on the virus from one person to another are: penetration in the anus or the vagina by a penis, blow jobs on a penis, eating out a vagina (especially if menstruating), putting fingers in an anus or vagina (if there are little cuts on the fingers). Having another STI can increase your chances of giving and getting HIV. The virus can also be spread using unprotected sex toys. The general rule is that if any bodily fluid enters into your blood stream through any kind of cut or graze, this is a high risk activity. Remember that you won't always notice if something is cut. For example, brushing or flossing teeth can create tiny cuts in your mouth that HIV can enter your body through. People shaving their face or pubic hair can also create tiny cuts as well.

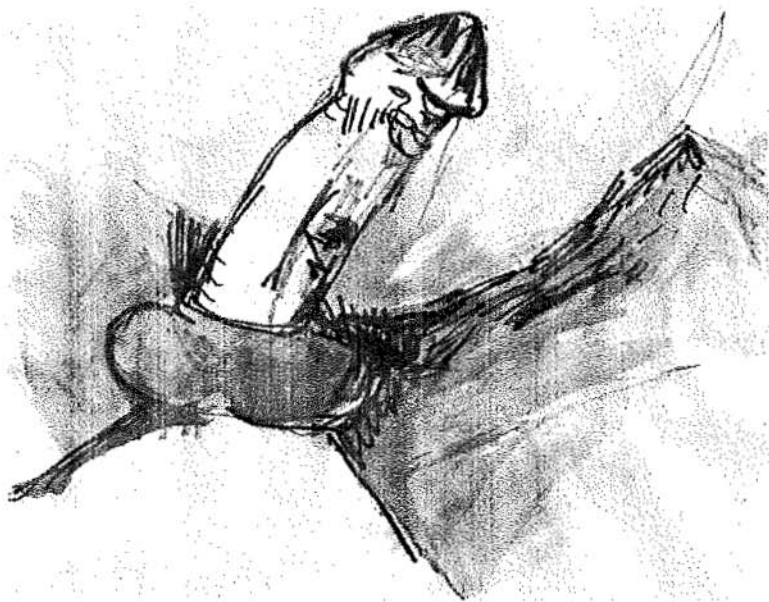
What should I be looking for?

There are usually no changes in your health in the first couple months or even years after being infected with HIV.

There is a blood test that tests for the virus. However, if you contracted HIV, it could take 3 months to show up in your blood. If you think that you might have come into contact with the virus then you should get tested and continue to have safe sex *at least* until your test comes back negative.

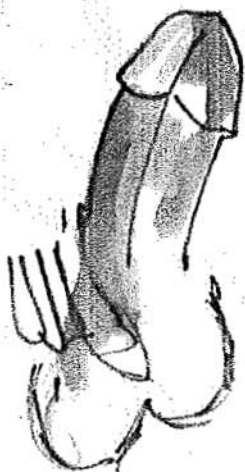
Can I get rid of it?

Unfortunately this virus is with you for life. But, there are many drugs you can take in Canada, to help slow down the development of AIDS, and people can live with the disease for a long time.



Using a condom is an excellent way of decreasing the chances of giving / getting HIV. Pop on a condom and have fun!!!

Protecting the Penis



In order to protect your penis (whether a flesh penis, a dildo, a zucchini...it still needs to be protected) from STIs - try and keep it protected from other people's bodily fluids. You can do this by using a condom. Condoms should be used not only for penetration (penis in a vagina or anus), but also during blowjobs and handjobs. Also, look and see where you

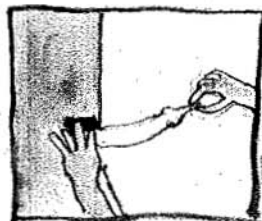
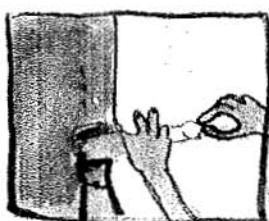
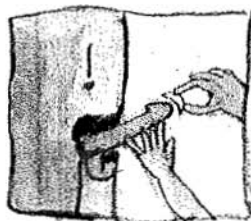
are putting your penis, are there any bumps/lumps on the other person? Even if you do use a condom and the person has a Herpes sore, the condom might not cover the area where the sore is. If there is something that you are worried about, ask about it. If you are having sex with someone - knowing about the kind of diseases a person might have is important info for you to know. If you don't feel comfortable asking them about it, then you might want to think about whether this is someone you really should be having sex with. Protecting each other from infections is respectful and is also a good way to show each other that you care.

Know how to put on a condom! Practice with some bananas or cucumbers at home or while you masturbate. If condoms are breaking

it is almost a sure thing that you are not using them properly (or maybe you're not using the right size or enough lube). Remember to squeeze at the tip and use lots of lube. Lube is often forgotten. Lube cannot only make sex more pleasurable but can also reduce the chances of skin tears and condom breakage. You can get free condoms at a lot of places, Head and Hands being only one of these. You can also get them at ACCM (AIDS Community Care Montreal), CEGEP's, High Schools, Universities, L'Anonyme and many other health oriented community services.

PUTTING ON A CONDOM

1. First, make sure the condom you are using is not expired (there are expiry dates written on the side of the condom)
2. A penis needs to be hard before you put the condom on, ah hem.
3. If the penis is uncircumcised pull the foreskin back.
4. Hold the top half-inch of the condom between your fingers and use the other hand to roll it down the shaft of the penis/dildo.
5. Use lots of lube, especially if you are going to be putting the penis in an anus. Dry condoms break more easily.

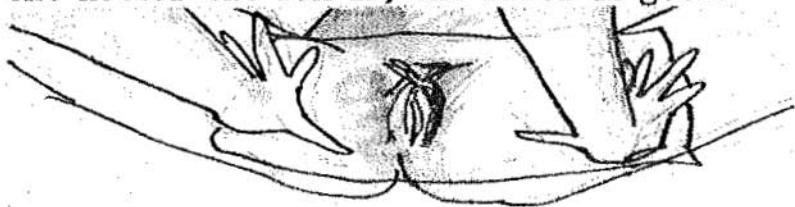


Protecting the Vulva

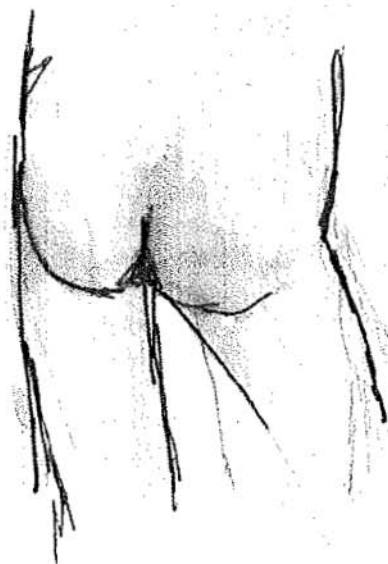


Vulva's come in all different shapes and sizes. In fact, you could say that genitals are like snow flakes, no two look alike. Whatever your vulva looks like, there are many things that we should do to

protect it during sex. If we are inserting penises into vaginas we can use condoms (condoms for the penis or the ones that go into the vagina). If we are inserting fingers or fists into vaginas we should use gloves. Lube is again important for decreasing the amount of tearing involved. If we are putting a mouth or tongue to a vulva we should use dental dams to protect the vulva from bacteria and viruses. Dental dams are hard to come by but they can easily be made using non-lubricated condoms or gloves (see page 30). Another thing that can lessen tearing is getting hot and horny. The vagina is a muscle and if you are really into the sex you are having it's going to be relaxed and stretch more easily. Let your partner know that the hotter the sex is, the safer it gets.



Protecting the Anus

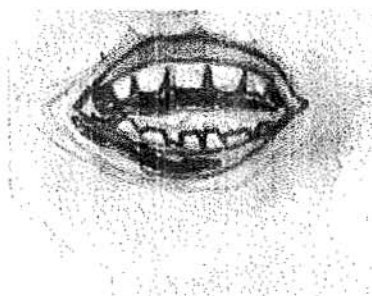


Talking about anuses is not done often enough. For some people their anus has absolutely nothing to do with their sexuality and this is fine. For others it is the rainbow leading them to a world of fun, happiness and extremely hot sex.

Unfortunately it is particularly

easy to pick up an STI by way of the anus. It is lined with a tissue that is quite sensitive to tearing and the tissue inside is very absorptive (sort of like a sponge). It also does not lubricate itself like a vagina does. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't have anal sex, but that you should cum prepared. Using lube becomes very important when inserting things into anuses and if you are going to be licking around the anus it is important to use a barrier there such as a dental dam (cut condom/glove, see page 30).

Protecting your Mouth



Here's a scenario. You are about to meet your hot new love interest for a movie night. You are pretty sure that it's not just a 'movie' you're going to be playing. You want to

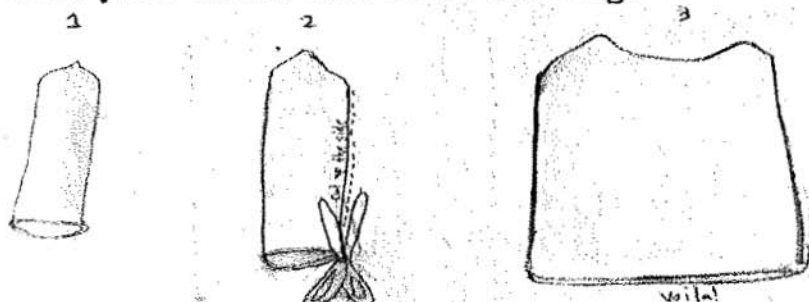
freshen up before your date and get rid of that garlic smell coming from your mouth. You brush and floss your teeth and TADA... you just made it a lot easier to catch an STI. Your mouth isn't often thought of as a place where you can catch STIs. However, it's quite easy for bacteria and viruses to get into the small cuts in the mouths often made by doing things like brushing your teeth and flossing. When putting penises or vaginas or anuses in our mouths it is important that there be a barrier between the inside of our mouth and the fluids coming from these other body parts. This can be done by putting condoms on penises or using a latex barrier on an anus or a vagina. Chlamydia, Herpes, Gonorrhea, Syphilis, Hepatitis A are some of the things we are trying to avoid here. I'm not saying that you shouldn't floss or brush your teeth, because you probably should to prevent gingivitis and other problems that would make catching an STI also more likely. I am just saying that before your date, if you just ate some baba ganoush, try and pop a breath mint and use a barrier.

Making A dental dAm

Dental dams are important and ignored topic in safe sex education. They have a very 'unsexy' title and actual dental dams are quite thick. In order to make a quick and accessible barrier just find an un-lubricated glove or a condom, a pair of scissors and follow the directions below.

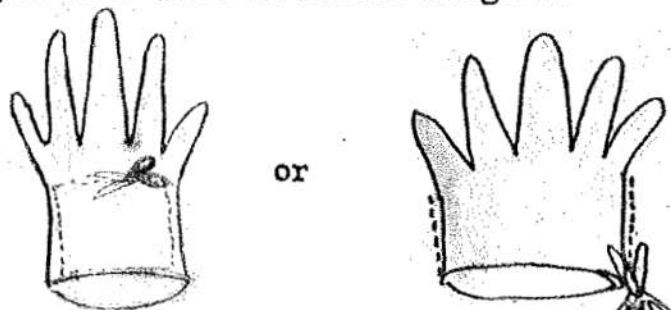
For condoms:

1. Unroll the condom about halfway.
2. Use scissors to cut the condom up the side.
3. Take your final product, hold the sides with your hands and start licking!



For Gloves:

You can use both ways below to cut your dental dam. You can leave the fingers on if you also want to insert fingers.



cleaning sex toys

If you are using sex toys that come into contact with your bodily fluids it is important that these be properly cleaned before they are used again whether it is with the same person or not. If you are using the toy on different partners or both around an anus and a vagina then it is best to use a new condom each time you use your toy. What you will do to clean it depends on what the toy is made of. Use water-based lube. Toys don't lubricate themselves.

Silicone: silicone toys can last a long time if taken care of properly. They can be washed with a mild antibacterial soap and water, can be boiled for up to five minutes and can even be put into the top rack of a dishwasher. Make sure the lube you're using has no silicone in it.

Rubber: using a mild soap and leaving the toys in some soapy water for about 20 minutes then wiping them with a wet cloth can clean rubber toys. Harsh detergents should be avoided because any possible residue can cause irritations.

Vibrators: vibrators are sometimes more complicated because there are parts that shouldn't be getting wet. Remove the batteries and make sure it's off before using a wet cloth with an anti-bacterial soap to clean it. Try not to get water near any metal areas because the metal can rust.

Fruit and Veggies: Are you gonna eat your zucchini after you stick it in your friend's vagina? It's probably not a good idea. Throw it out and don't use it in your salad.

Unprotected sex

Don't want to use protection? Think that it's time for you and your lover to throw away the barriers and accept the responsibility of unprotected sex??? Unprotected sex is often portrayed as only an option for heterosexual monogamous virgins. Even if you are in this category, this is still a huge decision. This decision should be made with a lot of thought and discussion with your sexual partner/s. Before you make a decision to stop using protection it's important to consider:

- Have you and your partner been together for more than 3 months using protection every time?
- Have you and your partner been tested before and after the three month period for STI's? Seen the results?
- Have you or your partner had any unprotected sexual contact with anyone else in this time?
- Is your partner sharing stuff to use drugs (pipes, needles, etc.)
- Have you thought about pregnancy (if this is an option)?

Sex without protection is a lot riskier than with a barrier. Sex can be much less stressful just knowing that using protection every time can reduce all risks. If you're thinking about having unprotected sex, it's a good idea to make an appointment with a health professional. Call Head and Hands for an appointment.

VAGINAL HEALTH

If you have a vagina it's important that you take good care of it. The word vagina has been used most frequently but we are also talking about vulvas (the outside part of the genitals). The vulva and the vagina have a delicate environment, which can easily be disrupted by things like changes in our diet, stress, or taking medications. Vagina's can get infections other than STIs, although this is not to say that they can't be caught through sex. The two most common types of infections are yeast infections and bacterial vaginosis. A fungus found regularly in mouths and vaginas causes yeast infections. Certain things can cause the fungus to get out of control and cause itching among other things like white clumpy discharge or a funky odour. One common reason people can get yeast infections is through using soaps to wash the vagina. The vagina is self-cleaning. If you have a yeast infection you don't have to go to the doctor, you can pick up some Monistat or yogurt pills at the local pharmacy to get rid of it. Bacterial vaginosis is very commonly caused by an imbalance of bacteria that live in the vagina. It can cause itching and a white or greyish, not so good smelling discharge coming from the vagina. It can be treated with antibiotics prescribed by your doctor. The mixing of genital fluids can pass yeast infections and bacterial vaginosis from person to person. If you have the symptoms of one of these infections, make sure you start using a barrier (if you are

not already using one). It is common for people to continue getting these infections from their untreated partners. It is good to know that both vulvas and penises can get these infections through sex.



Consent

Sex is supposed to be about having fun, not about doing things that make other people feel bad, unsafe, or uncomfortable. If anyone is feeling this way, then sex should not happen. A situation where one person has a lot of power over another person generally creates an unsafe sexual environment. Examples of this would be: teacher/student relationships, parent or guardian/child relationships etc. Situations like this can hurt people and organizations like Head and Hands and SACOMSS (398-8500) can provide help. Safe sex includes taking responsibility for your actions and avoiding putting anyone else in a place where they feel bad. Safe sex includes sex where everyone involved is giving consent.

Consent is complicated. It doesn't mean only saying yes or no. Consent can also be expressed in body language. If someone is turning away or pushing you away it is a way of saying they do not consent. Just because you are dating somebody, doesn't mean that they consent to having sex with you. Just because somebody had sex with you once, doesn't mean they will consent to it the next time. Consent changes over time. Even while in the middle of having sex a person has the right to change their mind. A person's frame of mind may also interfere with a person being able to give consent (if they are really wasted etc.) Communicate with your sex partners about what kind of sex you are comfortable with having ahead of time! Talk about what kind of protection you're gonna use.

Masturbation

If you don't know what you like, it's probably going to be difficult for anyone else to figure it out. When it comes to the enjoyment of sex, you are your own 'sexpert'. Masturbating is a safe and fun way to find out what you like. Masturbating is a great way to cope with things as well. If you are feeling stressed out or sad, it can help. If you aren't ready to start having sex with other people or don't want to, masturbate. Masturbation is a great way to be sexually active without the risk of STIs. Masturbate! It's for everyone!



Fighting BACK !!!

Since people discriminate against queers and other oppressed friends of ours it is good to not only be aware of how this is done but also to fight back. It is good to know that queers are not responsible for the HIV/AIDS Pandemic. It is good to know that sex-workers, Blacks, Hispanics, homos, and poor people are not responsible for it either. It hurts, but is good to know, that because this disease was first most common in these minority groups in Canada - our governments and health care systems did very little about it for almost 15 years. It is also good to know that a lot of people in Canada still don't have access to the money and services needed to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS and other STIs. There is a very clear connection between the discrimination against minorities and a lack of services and their health outcomes. So, it's good to share your knowledge about safe sex and it's cool to support people who educate and give health care to non-status people and who fight for queer rights. People at Head and Hands are part of this struggle. Come and join us!

The Radical Resource Page

- This zine was made primarily as a resource for Head and Hands. Head and Hands is a non-profit organization with lots of resources including a medical clinic, legal counselling, street workers, health educators, a councillor, a young parents program and a youth drop in center (Jeunesse 2000). You can check them out at www.headandhands.ca, (514) 481-0277, 5833 Sherbrooke West in NDG, Montreal, QC.
- STELLA: an organisation in Montreal fighting for sex workers rights www.chezstella.org
- 2110: peer counselling, information and referrals, resource library, free TTY phone, trans friendly resources and free syringe exchange program for hormone use. 2110 rue Mackay, Montreal, Qc. 848-2424.
- CACTUS: action community centre for intravenous drug users (514) 847-0067
- Queerline - (514) 398-6822 Listening / support / referral. Open Mon-Sat, 8-11pm
- ACCM - accmontreal.org & (514) 597-0928 - HIV education, prevention, support groups, social events, etc.
- CLSC des Faubourgs - (514) 527-2361 (InfoSanté, open 24/7) & www.clscdesfaubourgs.qc.ca - Confidential HIV tests and confidential sexual health services for people under 18. 1705, rue de la Visitation
- Project 10 - Bilingual support, one-on-one meetings, support groups, phone line, zines etc. Tel: (514) 989-4585 Fax: (514) 932-8089 project10@p10.qc.ca and www.p10.qc.ca
- Project Max: A sub-group of Project 10, offers support and activities for trans youth and youth questioning their gender identity.

WEBSITES that rock!

- <http://eminism.org> for a new spin on feminism
- www.gender.org for more about gender
- www.largesse.net about fat-positivism.
- www.strap-on.org a queer community message board
- www.alp.com Audre Lorde Project
- www.solidarityacrossborders.org



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